

NEWS

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SUPERVISORS APPROVE MORE ETHICS REFORMS

CHINO -- The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors today unanimously adopted County ordinance and policy changes as part of a continuing effort to restore trust in San Bernardino County government. The changes apply to surplus property sales, disclosure statement filing deadlines and the expense reimbursement policy.

"This represents one more step toward making county officials more accountable for their actions. The public needs to know that its government leaders and employees are conducting business above board and in the public interest and that violators will face consequences," Board of Supervisors Chairman Bill Postmus said of the package of reforms he co-authored along with Fourth District Supervisor Gary Ovitt.

County policy currently prohibits County administrative officials from bidding on or purchasing surplus County property. In an effort to remove even the appearance of impropriety by county staff, the Board expanded that prohibition against purchasing county property to restrict all county employees, not just policy makers and executives. In addition, the revision makes violation of this purchasing policy by exempt employees a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 or imprisonment in County jail for up to six months.

In addition, the Ethics in San Bernardino County Government Act was amended to include a provision requiring that all County officials who are required to file a form 700 Statement of Economic Interests must do so in a timely manner. Late filers may now face fines or referrals to the State Fair Political Practices Commission or Secretary of State's office if the forms are not filed by the deadline. The new ordinance takes away discretion from local filing officials to decide whether or not to sanction violators.

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Ethics Reforms
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Another part of the changes extends the existing expense reimbursement policies to apply to all elected officials and exempt employees, and county boards, commissions and committees. The policy previously applied only to the five county supervisors.

“Approval of this item adds teeth to our ethics policies by making the purchase of county property by County officials a misdemeanor punishable not only by a fine, but also by jail time. Currently it is a policy violation. This makes it a crime,” said Supervisor Ovitt.

The meeting, held at Chino City Hall, was only the second regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors ever to be held outside of the City of San Bernardino.